



EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS IN EMPLOYMENT PROCESS IN NIGERIA CIVIL SERVICE AND ITS PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

Tochukwu Alloy Aduma Ph.D

Department of Public Administration

Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu

Abstract

The purpose of recruitment and selection is to recruit and select those who best meet the needs of the work place. In achieving recruitment and selection plans of an organization, fairness in the process of recruitment and selection has to be met. It is very vital that employees perceive the process to be fair and transparent as this will impact on the performance and attitude of the work force. This paper sought to know the perceptions of Nigeria civil servants in the employment process into the service and how these perceptions impact on their performance. A survey design was employed with simple random sampling of 142 respondents from a representative ministry forming the base of data collection. Hypotheses were formulated and tested leading to some findings. The findings include that civil servants in Nigeria perceive employment process as unfair which ultimately affect their performance at work. Recommendations to ameliorate the situation include that government should promulgate unbiased policies on employment and do a fine tuning of the controversial Federal Character policy.

Keywords: Recruitment, Selection, Fairness, Performance, Civil Service.

Introduction

Recruitment is a set of activities used to obtain a sufficient number of the right people at the right time from the right places (Nickels et al, 1999). Its purpose is to select those who best meet the needs of the work place, and to develop and maintain a qualified and adequate workforce through which an organization can fulfill its human resource plan (Briggs, 2007). Taylor (2006) defined recruitment as an activity which generates a pool of applicants wishing to be employed by an organization out of which suitable candidates are selected. In the process of recruitment and selection, employees are eager to know if fairness and justice have been applied. Decisions on policy including employment policies and other organizational functioning incite employees to consider their fairness (Colquitt, Greenberg & Zapata-Phelan, 2005; Steiner, 1999; Steiner & Rolland, 2006).

In achieving recruitment plans of an organization therefore, justice and fairness in the process of recruitment and selection has to be met. It is very vital that employees perceive the process to be fair and transparent as this has been argued to have an impact on the attitude to work and performance. In that vein, Baldwin (2006) opined that these employee perceptions can influence attitudes and behaviours for good or ill, in turn having a positive or negative impact on employee performance and the organization's success. Bertolino (2006) argued that when employees believe the selection methods and procedures are unfair, they are less motivated.

Objectives of the Study

In the light of the rationale of the study, the objectives of this study are: to examine how Nigeria civil service selection process is perceived by the employees and to probe how Nigeria civil service selection process has affected the performance of civil servants.

Literature Review

The subject of fairness in employment and its implications has given scholars some concern over the years. It is salient therefore that we do a review of the subject matter based on previous works of some authorities.

Selection Process and Performance Implications

Employees are sensitive to recruitment and selection process in organizations. They perceive this process as fair or unfair and performance is affected based on this perception. Baldwin (2006) suggested that both current and prospective employees have been found to react badly to unfair selection procedures. Baldwin further maintained that workers may develop negative attitudes and lower commitment levels if they see that organizations are operating unfairly in selecting new staff. To avoid these negative implications, organizations are advised to adhere to selection procedures that will be perceived as fair and just. Baldwin (2006) outlined what she called the characteristics of a fair selection procedure to include:

- Assessment techniques that can reasonably be seen to measure these criteria should be employed. In this sense, assessment centers are a good example where competencies will be assessed.
- There should be consistent procedures for all candidates applying for the same role and,
- Opportunities should be given to candidates to express and explain themselves and in effect have a voice in the process (Baldwin, 2006).

Candidates perceive selection process as fair and just when merit system is employed and individual efforts recognized, when the candidates have a voice and input in the exercise, when there is maximum interaction between the employer and employees including explanations by the employer to the employees on issues the latter were not consulted on, and the employer strictly adhering to selection criteria. The result of all these positives is high performance of candidates when selected. The reaction of employees to the attitudes of their organizations is the crux of the matter. As employees perceive fairness in organization's conduct, organizational good conduct becomes more ardent. They go beyond their job roles and description and perform maximally that will enhance the organization's effectiveness and stability. Borman & Motowidlo (1993) called it contextual performance and defined it as non-task related work behaviours and activities that contribute to the social and psychological aspects of the organization. Contextual performance consists of four dimensions: persistence of enthusiasm, assistance to others, rule and proscribed procedure and openly defending the organization's objectives (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993).

Perceptions of fairness in employment procedure result in organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) by employees. Organ (1988) sees OCB as individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization. According to Organ (1988) OCBs are discretionary behaviours, which are not part of the job description or assignment. They are behaviours exhibited by employees as a result of personal choice. Organ (1988) also asserted that OCBs go above and beyond that which is an enforceable requirement of the job description and that OCBs contribute positively to overall organizational effectiveness. Perception of fairness and justice by employees results also in prosocial organizational behaviour (POB). POB is defined by Brief & Motowidlo (1986) as behaviour within an organization that is aimed at improving the welfare of another person. In this regard, this behaviour becomes a social function. While it is totally not connected with the organization, it is connected with the lives of employees of the organization. Wikipedia (2013) asserts that someone exhibiting prosocial behaviour could be helping a coworker with personal matter. Hence, in Nigeria coworkers engage in prosocial organizational behaviours of attending to social functions like marriage or funeral ceremonies of fellow employees or those related to them.

These attitudes lead further to 'Extra-role behaviour' (ERB). ERB is defined as behaviour that attempts to benefit the organization and that goes beyond existing role expectations (Organ et al, 2006). In ERB, employees can exhibit behaviours that tend to cater for the interest of the organization beyond that of the coworkers. This can include whistle blowing. Near & Miceli (1987) as cited in Organ et al (2006) see whistle blowing as involving the rattling out of one employee by another so that unethical and or illegal practices are brought to the attention of authorities.

All these extra role behaviours that are not part of the job description or assignment help to further the interest of the organization but can only happen when employees perceive organizational decisions and actions as fair and just. It can also lead to civic virtue which Law et al (2005) suggest is characterized by behaviours that include the employee's deep concerns and active interest in the life of the organization. Organ et al (2006) emphasized that this dimension also encompasses positive involvement in the concerns of the organization. Civic virtue can occur as in daily affairs such as attending organizational meetings and keeping abreast with what is going on with the organization in general. It can be demonstrated also by defending the organization's policies and practices when they are questioned or challenged by an outside source (Wikipedia, 2013). All these can only occur when employees perceive the organization conduct especially in employment process as fair and just.

Three types of Organizational Fairness or Justice

Distributive Justice, Procedural Justice and Interactional Justice

Distributive justice according to Steiner & Rolland (2006) is the fairness of distributions or allocations of rewards. In distributive justice, the principle of equity is preferred (Adams, 1965). Bertolino (2006) collaborates but suggests that this equity principle is preferred both by decision makers (in this case the employers) and the persons affected by these decisions (in this case the employees). Basically equity implies that rewards should be proportional to contributions or efforts (i.e merit); and that this proportionality is evaluated by comparing one's own ratio to that constructed for a comparison. To consider a situation as fair, the ratios must be equivalent (Steiner, Trahan, Haptonstahl & Fointiat, 2006). This implies that candidates for selection in organizations put effort proportionally and that merit system should be used if they are to consider the exercise as fair. However, Bertolino (2006) submits that although individual contributions should be recognized and viewed as fair, in other situations, consideration should be given to special needs and should be considered as fair.

There are many procedures employed by organizations in reaching decisions especially selection decisions. These procedures positively or negatively affect employees as they view them as fair or unfair. Thibaut and Walker (1975) in Bertolino (2006) were concerned with procedures that allow people to participate in decisions that concern them. They maintain that people must have a 'voice' and that they found the decisions themselves fairer, irrespective of their variance when they had a voice. Levanthal (1976) proposed other procedural fairness as including consistency of application of procedures, bias suppression in procedures, accuracy of information used, representativeness of the decision criteria used, and ethicality of procedures. Colquitt et al (2005), Steiner & Rolland (2006) all agree that procedures which respect these rules are perceived to be fair. In that regard, a rule made by an organization as a procedure for selection or decision making should not be tampered with to favour an individual or a group. There should be consistency in the guidelines for recruitment and selection. A goal post should not be shifted when play has commenced. The process must be seen to be fair and perceived as such by employees.

Employees perceive decisions including selection decisions as fair when there are interactions between employers and employees. Bies and Moag (1986) maintained that there is an interpersonal interactions going on in exchanges between decision-makers and recipients of these decisions. These interactions will bring them closer, fostering understanding and acceptance of decisions and also bringing harmony and unity in organizations with positive implications. Colquitt (2001) Jougland & Steiner (2005) identified two aspects of interactional justice. The first is social sensitivity which they described as treating people with dignity and respect. The second is informational justice which according to them is providing explanations for decisions. Any organization that carries its people along treating them with dignity and respect and involving them in decision taking that affects them either directly or indirectly usually has a workforce that is vibrant and productive. And even when decisions are taken without consulting the staff, the organization deems it fit to provide explanations and excuses for decisions taken, employees perceive these decisions as fair and are carried along. This perception of fairness by employees will result in positive implications.

Theoretical Framework

The theory used in this work is the organizational justice theory. This theory refers to employee perceptions of fairness in the workplace. This theory can be classified into four categories as distributive, procedural, informational and interactional. Distributive justice according to Steiner & Rolland (2006) is the fairness of distributions or allocations of rewards. In distributive justice, equity is involved. In equity, rewards should be proportional to efforts. Procedural justice on the other hand indicates that there is justice in an organization when employees are allowed to participate in decisions that concern them. They should have a 'voice' in decision making. In that regard, proper procedures should be taken in decision making if workers are to perceive them as fair. Also, all procedures mapped out for recruitment and selection of employees should be strictly adhered to.

Informational justice as an element of organizational justice theory maintains the need for interpersonal interactions between decision makers and employees. These interactions will bring them closer, fostering understanding and acceptance of decisions. Interactional justice on another angle identifies social sensitivity and informational justice as key to employees perceptions of fairness in organizations. Social sensitivity preaches about treating people with dignity and respect while informational justice is about providing explanations to employees on decisions taken by decision makers. Any organization that treats its people with dignity and respect and involves them in decision taking usually has a productive workforce. Single or a collection of all the variables of organizational justice theory results in fair perception of the organization and improves performance. Bertolino (2006) believes that when people believe the selection methods and procedures are unfair, they are less motivated to perform well and have reduced self-esteem.

Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study, this paper articulates the following hypotheses:

1. Employees of Nigeria civil service perceive selection process in their organizations as fair.
2. Selection process in Nigeria civil service affects positively the performance of civil servants in the country.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a positivist research approach. The rationale for using this approach is that it provides the researcher with an objective and scientific method to gain an understanding of the research interest, in this case employees' perceptions of fairness and its implications in Nigeria civil service. This study was conducted using a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional method of data collection. This simply means data for the study were gotten from questionnaires distributed to respondents at a particular point in time.

Research Area

This study was limited to one federal government ministry based in Enugu State, Nigeria. The ministry is the Ministry of Labour and Productivity. Nigeria is a big geographical area having civil service offices in all the 36 states of the country. The researcher due to lack of capacity, cannot cover the entire ministries. But, the strength in picking only one ministry as our research area lies in the fact that the result of the work can be generalized across the country since all the ministries exhibit same characteristics.

Population/Sample Size

The ministry had a total population of about two hundred and twenty one (221) civil servants, out of which a sample size of one hundred and forty two (142) was drawn using the Taro Yamane formula given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

N = Population

$$I = \text{Fixed Factor}$$

$$e = \text{Margin of Error (5\%)}$$

$$n = \frac{221}{1 + 221 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{221}{1 + 221 (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{221}{1 + 0.5525}$$

$$n = \frac{221}{1 + 1.5525}$$

$$= 142$$

The questionnaires were distributed on the basis of senior and junior staff of the ministry. One hundred and five (105) questionnaires were retrieved and found usable for analysis; giving rise to a 74% response rate.

Tools for Data Analysis

The hypotheses of the study were tested using the inferential statistical tool involving the use of Pearson Fisher Chi Square test.

Hypotheses Test Model

The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Fisher Chi-Square formula. The Chi-Square formula is stated thus:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$$

Where χ^2 = Chi-Square

Σ = Summation Sign

O_i = Observed Frequency

e_i = Expected Frequency

Hypothesis One

Hi: Employees of Nigeria civil service perceive selection process in their organizations as fair.

Hypothesis one was tested using data in table 4.1

Table 4.1: Distribution of respondents on whether employees of Nigeria civil service perceive selection process in their organizations as fair.

Response	Senior	Junior	Total
Agree	8	5	13
Disagree	62	30	92
Total	70	35	105

Constructing the contingency table, we have

Response	Senior	Junior	Total
Agree	8(8.67)	5(4.33)	13
Disagree	62(61.33)	30(30.67)	92
Total	70	35	105

The expected frequency is given by the formula

$$\frac{R_T \times C_T}{G_T}$$

Where RT = Row Total, CT = Column total and GT = Grand total

$$R_1 \times c_1 = \frac{13 \times 70}{105} = 8.67$$

$$R_1 \times c_2 = \frac{13 \times 35}{105} = 4.33$$

$$R_2 \times c_1 = \frac{92 \times 70}{105} = 61.33$$

$$R_2 \times c_2 = \frac{92 \times 35}{105} = 30.67$$

Constructing the test statistics, we have

O _i	e _i	O _i -e _i	(O _i -e _i)	$\frac{(O_i-e_i)^2}{e_i}$
8	8.67	-0.67	0.45	0.052
5	4.33	0.67	0.45	0.104
62	61.33	0.67	0.45	0.007
30	30.67	-0.67	0.45	0.015
				0.178

The calculated value = 0.178, while the level of significance = 0.05.

The degree of freedom (Df) is given by the formula (R-1) (C-1). R=2 while C=2. Therefore, (R-1) (C-1) = (2-1) (2-1) = 1x1 = 1DF

The critical value at 1DF and 0.05 level of significance = 3.84

Decision Rule

Accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis, if the calculated value is greater than the critical value. Otherwise, accept the null hypothesis.

Decision

Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, the paper accepted the null hypothesis which states that employees of Nigeria civil service, DO NOT perceive selection process in their organizations as fair.

Hypothesis Two

H_i: Selection process in Nigeria civil service positively affects the performance of civil servants in the country.

Hypothesis Two was tested using data in table 4.2

Table 4.2: Distribution of respondents on whether selection process in Nigeria civil service positively affects the performance of civil servants in the country.

Response	Senior	Junior	Total
Agree	14	8	22
Disagree	56	27	83
Total	70	35	105

Constructing the contingency table, we have

Response	Senior	Junior	Total
Agree	14(14.67)	8(7.33)	22
Disagree	56(55.33)	27(27.67)	83
Total	70	35	105

$$R_1 \times c_1 = \frac{22 \times 70}{105} = 14.67$$

$$R_1 \times c_2 = \frac{22 \times 35}{105} = 7.33$$

$$R_2 \times c_1 = \frac{83 \times 70}{105} = 55.33$$

$$R_2 \times c_2 = \frac{83 \times 35}{105} = 27.67$$

Constructing the test statistics, we have

O _i	e _i	O _i -e _i	(O _i -e _i)	$\frac{(O_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$
14	14.67	-0.67	0.45	0.031
8	7.33	0.67	0.45	0.062
56	55.33	0.67	0.45	0.008
27	27.67	-0.67	0.45	0.016
				0.117

The calculated value = 0.117

The degree of freedom (Df) = (R-1) (C-1) = (2-1) (2-1) = 1x1 = 1DF

The level of significance = 0.05. The critical value at 1 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance = 3.84.

Decision Rule

Accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis, if the calculated value is greater than the critical value. Otherwise, accept the null hypothesis.

Decision

Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, the paper accepted the null hypothesis which states that selection process in Nigeria civil service does not positively affect the performance of civil servants in the country.

Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

Some findings were made through analyses of questionnaire and hypotheses tested. The findings are as follows:

1. Civil servants in Nigeria do not believe that selection process in their organization is fair and transparent.
2. Civil servants in Nigeria believe that unfair selection process in their organization adversely affect their performance.

Conclusion

One's perception on any subject matter will directly or indirectly reflect in one's character towards the object. If one perceives a matter fairly, there will be positive implications or response but there will be negative implications or response where one perceives a matter as unfair. This investigation has been able to analyze the implications of employees' perceptions of fairness in selection process in Nigeria civil service. In Nigeria, there are impediments to the realization of fairness in selection process in organizations especially government organizations. It is proven that recruitment process in Nigeria civil service lacks equity and transparency, making it difficult if not impossible to recruit the best qualified applicants for available jobs (Briggs, 2007). The most glaring of the impediments is the federal character system. Federal character system in Nigeria is put up to ensure equitable sharing of posts, resources and employment, based on federating components and is backed by legislation in section 153 of the Nigerian constitution (Thrill, 2011). The implication of this perception is poor performance at work by these employees. This paper recognizes the fact that other variables outside selection process contribute significantly to their performance outcome. Other factors attributed to the problem of employment in Nigeria civil service include inadequate and invalid standards for evaluating job candidates, sources of

locating potential applicants, transparency and independence of the recruiting authority, and the administrative machinery for determination of qualifications (Briggs, 2007). But, straightening and improving the selection process will go a long way in influencing performance and productivity.

Recommendations

We recommend that government of Nigeria should promulgate acts on policies on employment that are unbiased. Supporting this view, Briggs (2007) asserted that subjective and informed sources of recruitment should be de-emphasized, and instead sources from educational institutions and professional organizations should be encouraged. This in the long run will be beneficial to the system as a more functional and more efficient civil service will be developed. I am of the opinion in this work that the Federal Character system of employment in Nigeria is not altogether a bad policy. It only needs fine tuning to meet the aspirations of the workers and citizens at large. In that light, more personnel that should oversee the implementation of this policy to avoid abuse should be engaged. Briggs (2007) supports this assertion by writing that the number of Federal Civil Service commissioners should be increased with the establishment of zonal and state offices. This will in the long run ensure accurate and adequate employment of workers based on fairness. To improve performance, other variables apart fairness in selection process will come into play. In that regard, workers remuneration needed to be increased to enhance motivation.

References

- Adams, J.S. (1965) Inequity in social exchange in L. Berkowitz (Ed.) *Advances in experimental social psychology*. New York: Academic Press.
- Anderson, N. (2011) Perceived job discrimination: Toward a model of applicant propensity to case initiation in selection. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 19, 229-244.
- Baldwin, S. (2006) *Organizational justice*. Uk: Institute for Employment Studies, University of Sussex.
- Bauer, T.N., McCarthy, J., Anderson, N., Truxillo, D.M., & Salgado, J.F. (2012) *What we know about applicant reactions on attitudes and behaviour*. Research Summary and Best Practices, Slop White Paper Series. Retrieved from <http://www.slop.org/WhitePaperSeries20112012ApplicantReactions> pdf on 15 Oct. 2013.
- Bies, R.J. & Moag, J.F. (1986) International justice: Communication criteria of fairness in R.J Lewicki, B.H Sheppard & M.H. Bazerman (Eds.) *Research on negotiations in organizations*. Greenwich, C.T: JAI Press, pp. 43-55.
- Borman, W.C. & Motowidlo, S.J. (1993) Expanding the criterion domain to include elements of contextual performance, in N. Schmitt & W.C Borman (Eds.) *Personnel selection in organizations*. *Academy of Management Review*, 11, 71-98.
- Brief, A.P. & Motowidlo, S.J. (1986) Prosocial organizational behaviours. *Academy of Management Review*, 11, 710-725.
- Briggs, B.R. (2007) Problems of recruitment in civil service: Case of the Nigerian civil service. *African Journal of Business Management*, 1 (6): 142-153.
- Colquitt, J.A. (2001) On the dimensionality of organizational justice: A construct validation of a measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 386-400.
- Colquitt, J.A., Greenberg, J. & Zapata-Phelan, C.P. (2005) What is organizational justice? A historical overview, in J. Greenberg & J.A. Colquitt (Eds.) *Handbook of organizational justice*. Mahwah, N.J: Erlbaum.
- Ford, D., Truxillo, D.M., & Bauer, T.N. (2009) Rejected but still there: Shifting the focus to the promotional context. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 17, 402-416.
- Gilliland, S.W. (1993) The perceived fairness of selection systems: An organizational justice perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 18, 694-734.
- Jouglaard-Tritschler, D. & Steiner, D.D. (2005) *Validation of the four-factor model of organizational justice in France*. Communication presentee an congres annual de la society for industrial/organization psychology, Los Angeles.
- Law, S.K., Wong, C. & Chen, X.Z. (2005) The construct of organizational citizenship behaviour. Should we analyze after we have conceptualized? In D.L. Turnipseed (Ed.) *Handbook of organizational citizenship behaviour*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, 47-65.
- Leventhal, G.S. (1976) The distribution of rewards and resources in groups and organizations, in L. Berkowitz & W. Walster (Eds.) *Advances in experimental social psychology*. New York: Academic Press.
- Macan, T.H., Avedon, M.J., Paese, M. & Smith, D.E. (1994) The effects of applicants' reactions to cognitive ability tests and an assessment center. *Personnel Psychology*, 47, 715-738.

- Nickels, W.G., McHugh, J.M., McHugh, S.M. (1999) *Understanding business*, 5th edition. USA: Irwin/McGraw-Hill.
- Organ, D.W. (1988) *Organizational citizenship behaviour: The good soldier syndrome*. Lexington, M.A: Lexington Books.
- Organ, D.W., Podsakoff, P.M. & MacKenzie, S.P. (2006) *Organizational citizenship behaviour: Its nature, antecedents, and consequences*. London: Sage Publications.
- Smith, J.W., Reilly, R.R., Millsap, R.E., Pearlman, K. & Stoffey, R.W. (1993) Applicant reactions to selection procedures. *Personnel Psychology*, 46, 49-76.
- Steiner, D.D. & Rolland, F. (2006) Comment réussir l' introduction de changements: Les apports de la justice organisationnelle, in C. Levy-Leboyer, C. Louche & J.P. Rolland (Eds.) *RH: Les apports de la psychologie du travail, management des organisations*. Paris: Editions 'd' organization, 53-69.
- Steiner, D.D. (1999) Qu'est-ce qui est juste? Une introduction à la psychologie de la justice distributive et procédurale, in J.L. Beauvois, N. Dubois & W. Doise (Eds.) *La psychologie sociale*, 4; *La construction sociale de la personne*. Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 87-102.
- Steiner, D.D., Trahan, W.A., Haptonstah, D.E. & Fointiat, V. (2006) The justice of equity, equality, and need in reward distributions: A comparison of French and American respondents. *International Review of Social Psychology*, 19, 49-74.
- Truxillo, D.T. & Fraccaroli, F. (2011) A person-centered work psychology: Changing paradigms by broadening horizons. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, 4, 102-104.